

CUPE'S QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

SUMMER 2016

Counterpoint

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bargaining rights in
Quebec continues**

**KEEPSAKE POSTER –
PRIDE IN OUR WORK**

CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees



SHE SAID

“After something this tragic, it’s important to look after each other, that’s what we do in CUPE.”

Julie O’Brien, CUPE 1505 president, Employees of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (including Fort McMurray), p3.



Quebec: Campaign to defend bargaining rights continues

In May, Quebec municipal officials received quite the welcome at the opening of the meeting of the Union of Quebec Municipalities (UMQ). Thousands of demonstrators gathered outside the Quebec City Convention Centre to remind officials and Premier Philippe Couillard, who was opening the meeting, that disrupting the balance of power at the negotiating table is a direct attack on a fundamental right and an unacceptable affront

to all Quebec workers.

Many in the labour movement joined the municipal workers in warning the government against a bill that would restrict the right of workers to bargain freely. CUPE National President Mark Hancock and National Secretary-Treasurer Charles Fleury were in attendance.

“It is unprecedented in the history of labour relations in Quebec! Elected officials are trying to shift their financial problems

onto the backs of their employees. It’s despicable,” said Denis Bolduc, president of CUPE Quebec.

“The politicians need to sit down and negotiate! We have shown that negotiation works: 95 per cent of collective agreements are settled respectfully.”

The campaign *Négocier d’égal à égal c’est fondamental!* [Bargaining as Equals: A Basic Right] was launched earlier this year and is continuing across the province.

■ Lisa Djvahirdjian

Reconciling cultures in BC’s Sea-to-Sky School District

History was made outside a public school in Whistler on May 6, as the flags of two First Nations communities were raised beside the Canadian flag in a symbolic display of cross-cultural cooperation in the local school district—an event CUPE had a role in making happen.

At a sun-drenched, mid-day ceremony held near the entrance to Whistler Secondary School, representatives of the Lil’wat and Squamish First Nations, along with those of School District 48 (Sea-to-Sky), presided over a symbolic flag-raising that participants described as an important sign of progress in the recognition of aboriginal communities as equal partners in BC education.

Members of both First Nations, appearing in traditional ceremonial dress before a crowd of about 75, shared prayers of gratitude to the beat of drums, followed by the sharing of a pipe, before the two First Nations’ flags were raised on the school flagpoles. Along with Whistler Secondary and district representatives, the Lil’wat and Squamish speakers thanked the Indigenous leadership team, students and staff for their work in organizing the event.

“The significance of the event is that we are teaching our children fundamentals of how to be with each other—and that there’s a way we can do it that has deeper connection and meaning that makes us stronger,” says CUPE 779 member Kiyoshi Kosky, an educational assistant who advocated for the flag raising at the school district and was part of the organizing team for the event.

CUPE 779, which represents K-12 support staff in the Sea-to-Sky school district, endorsed the event at its April 22 AGM.

■ Dan Gawthrop



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Dawn Lahey brings veteran leadership to NL library fight

Dawn Lahey is a dedicated activist. She's worked in the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial library system for 35 years and has been active in her local for 34 of those years.

She has been president of CUPE 2329 since 1988, vice-president of CUPE NL for the past six years and on the Division executive since 1993, originally as recording secretary.

Says Lahey, "I have spent most of my work life involved in the labour movement. This involvement has enabled me to understand that workers have the right to work in an atmosphere where their rights are respected by employers and I have made it my mission to ensure that happens in my workplace."

As if to confirm the oft-quoted statement, 'If you want something done, give it to a busy person,' Lahey is also a past member of the National Anti-Privatization Committee and a current

member of the National Library Workers' Committee since its inception. She has been a member facilitator since 1986, sits on the St. John's and District Labour Council executive and is a member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour Education Committee.

A passionate advocate for workers in the library sector, Lahey says, "Library work has often been devalued by employers and governments and I have worked to change those mindsets over my years of

involvement. We have been fortunate to be able to fight for workers' rights through our union and collective bargaining here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

"Unfortunately, it only takes one regressive government like our current Liberal government to dismantle improvements that have taken decades to build up. It's almost impossible to believe that a provincial government in this day and age would think it is acceptable to close half of the entire library branches across the province. This is why we must always be vigilant and never take our working conditions

for granted." Find out more about cuts to Newfoundland and Labrador libraries on page 6. **John McCracken**



CUPE 1505 members stay on the job while Fort McMurray residents evacuate

When 80,000 residents of Fort McMurray fled wildfires and evacuated their city, a number of people stayed behind. Others evacuated but came back quickly to ensure that when the public were allowed back in, they

had good functioning public services to come home to. Fort McMurray is a part of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo. CUPE 1505 represents over 1,000 employees of the city, including many who stayed behind to

transport first responders, clean up the city, and make sure residents have safe drinking water. City transit drivers worked 86-hour weeks transporting people in and out of the city, even as fires blazed and air quality was poor. On one day, the air quality (normally measured on a scale of 1-10) was measured at 38. Drivers and other workers had to be fitted with special breathing equipment normally reserved for firefighters going into infernos. Workers laboured to prepare water systems,

draining reservoirs of contaminated water, shutting off water to destroyed properties, flushing pipes and monitoring and testing water quality. Working or not, tensions have been high for all residents. "Everyone has a high level of anxiety throughout this whole process," said Julie O'Brien, president of CUPE 1505. "If you evacuated, you want to get home. If you are working, you are wandering around a ghost town every day—either scenario is hard on a person."

O'Brien and Vice-President Joe McIsaac were given clearance to visit the evacuated city and meet with members still working. "It's important for us to be there," she said. "Tensions are high, and disputes sometimes get uglier than they need to be. If we are there we can represent our members and see firsthand what the need is." O'Brien said local officials made a point of doing wellness checks on members during the visits. "After something this tragic, it's important to look after each other, that's what we do in CUPE." **Lou Arab**



NATIONAL PRESIDENT MARK HANCOCK

Making workers' votes count

It's important for CUPE to make sure our voice as workers is loud and strong. The progressive change we want for our families and communities will not come from the top-down. While we can make great strides at the bargaining table, CUPE members need to be heard at the ballot box too. We have a right, and a responsibility, to be politically active and push for a better Canada. Our present electoral system is failing Canadians. The reasons are complex, but in basic terms majority governments are regularly elected with less than a majority of votes. And too often, a political party's standing in the House of Commons doesn't reflect how many Canadians actually voted for them.

Many Canadians don't feel their voices are being heard. Many think this is why voter turnout has been steadily dropping over the past few decades. This is why CUPE has joined other unions and allies in calling for change. We are calling for a system that better reflects the political preferences of Canadian voters. This March, our national executive board passed a resolution supporting the introduction of a mixed-member proportional representation system in federal elections. This system combines proportional representation of parties in Parliament with the direct election of an MP in each constituency. It is a fairer system and will help ensure the House of Commons is more representative of Canadians' political views. Starting this summer, every MP will be holding a town hall meeting on electoral reform. They will report back what they hear in their constituencies to a special Parliamentary committee that will guide reforms to our voting system. It's important that CUPE members be heard in these town halls. This is our opportunity to make sure our electoral system truly reflects the wishes and interests of workers. I encourage CUPE members to attend the town halls in their ridings, and tell their MP why proportional representation is the best choice for a fairer Canada.

MARK HANCOCK ONLINE twitter.com/CUPENatPres



Focus:

TAXATION



Pension funds investing in privatization of infrastructure

The federal government's March 22 budget made one thing very clear: the previous government's active support for infrastructure privatization is destined to continue and may even expand under the Liberals.

For those voters who liked the Liberal Party's widely cited campaign promise of "\$120 billion in infrastructure investments over 10 years", privatization was not an obvious part of the deal. Many Canadians have been quite rightly calling for the rebuilding of our physical infrastructure after decades of neglect and under-investment by cost-

cutting governments.

However, "infrastructure investment" has increasingly become synonymous with privatization in recent years. In a growing range of areas, public spending on physical infrastructure is being channelled into costly and wasteful "public-private partnerships" (P3s) and other projects that introduce private sector management and even ownership into sensitive areas that should be remaining public.

But that's not all. The federal budget also announced plans to establish a central role for large

public sector pension funds as major private investors in a renewal program still being developed. This linkage reflects an already established and troubling pattern of Canadian (and other) pension funds buying up large chunks of public infrastructure—airports, roads, ports, water utilities—all around the world.

On the face of it, having workers' pension funds investing in much needed public infrastructure sounds like an ideal combination. Throughout the post-war period, pension funds were made available to finance public investment needs

primarily through their purchase of secure, low-risk and long-term government bonds. This was an ideal kind of partnership—pension funds made finance available to the public sector to support infrastructure investments that governments and people needed and wanted.

But the emerging pattern is entirely different. Pension funds are now being tapped as a source of finance for P3 deals that often involve a complete transformation of the ongoing ownership, control, and management of public infrastructure into for-profit and commercial

mandates. According to the March 2016 budget, the government plans some \$120 billion in infrastructure investment over the next 10 years. As part of this plan, they propose to "engage public pension plans" in infrastructure investment initiatives that would include so-called "asset recycling," another term for privatization.

Asset Recycling = Privatization

In fact, managers of several Canadian funds have already been convening meetings with the Minister of Infrastructure,

Têtes-à-têtes!



Tax havens: the billions that get away

While many politicians are defending the need for austerity policies, our governments are losing billions of dollars because of tax havens.

A country is considered to be a tax haven when it allows private companies—or individuals—to pay zero taxes or to be taxed at a ridiculously low rate. These tax havens enable large corporations and the wealthy to circumvent the rules and evade paying taxes in their own country.

It is estimated that at least \$270 billion are "invested"

by Canadian companies in tax havens (including Barbados, Luxembourg, the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas and Bermuda).

CUPE Economist Toby Sanger believes the problem is even bigger. "There's a difference between tax avoidance, considered legal, and tax evasion, which isn't. But tax havens aren't just used to avoid and evade taxes; they're also secretive jurisdictions used to hide money from creditors and to launder the proceeds of crime and fraud," he said.

Costs

Since these tax schemes are often secret, complex and murky, it is difficult to determine the precise amount of government revenue lost. Dennis Howlett, director of Canadians for Tax Fairness, believes this figure could be as high as \$7.8 billion annually.

Author Alain Deneault, a researcher at the Réseau pour la Justice Fiscale [Tax Justice Network], thinks that the situation is even more serious. "The data we have from Statistics Canada

“Public services are cut on the pretext that there is no funding. But that’s a lie.”

Toby Sanger, CUPE Economist.

Amarjeet Sohi.

These Canadian policy shifts reflect a global infrastructure privatization trend that has already expanded tremendously in the past 15 years, with large Canadian pension funds themselves at the forefront. Having a friendlier and less cut-throat public face has allowed large pension funds to access outright ownership of airports, ports, water systems, railways, energy grids, and an array of other public assets.

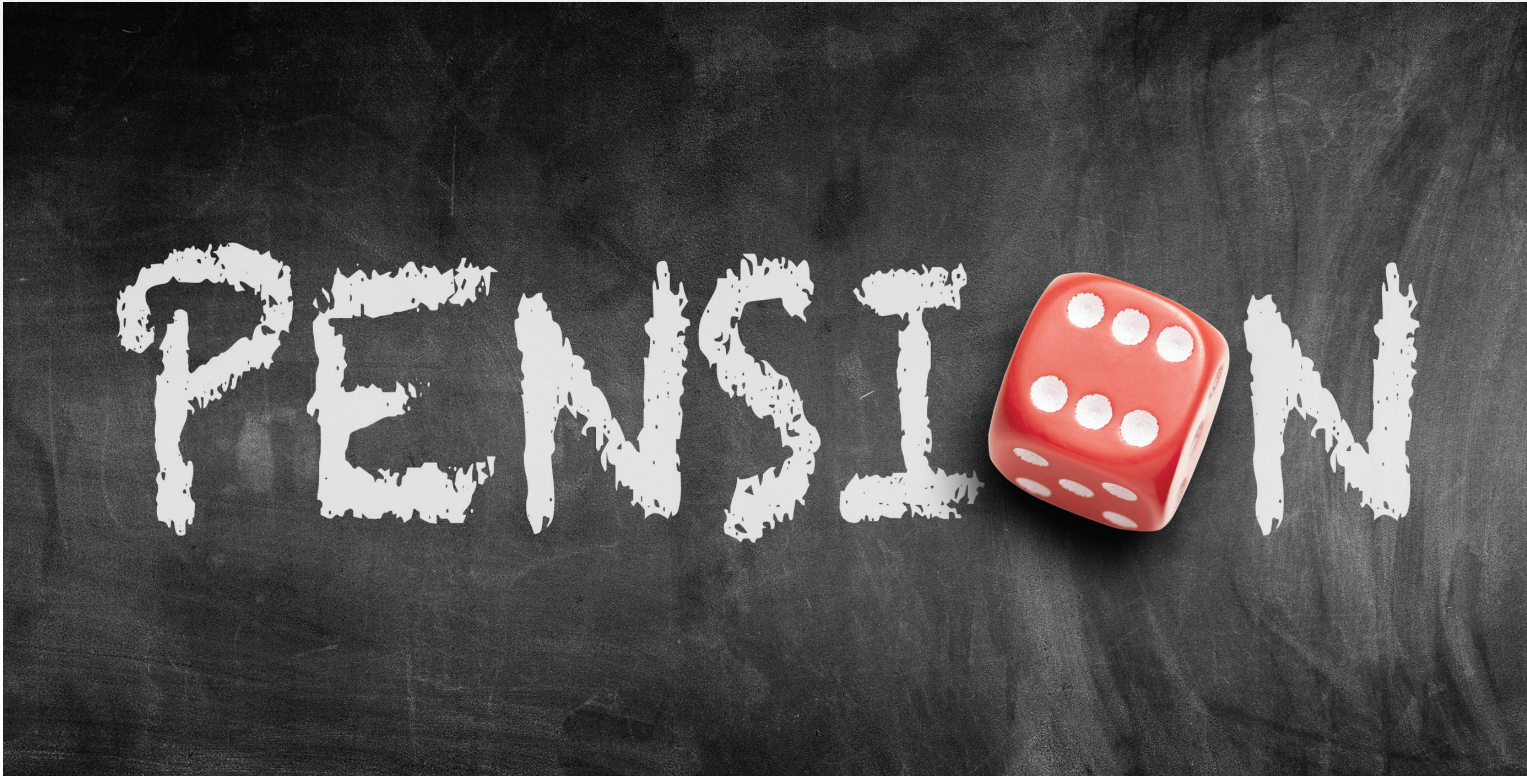
What is new and different about the latest trend is that the pension funds, often through 100 per cent owned subsidiary corporations, are becoming themselves the direct owners and operators of the infrastructure they are acquiring. This level of ownership and control is transforming some of the largest pension funds into

much more complex infrastructure corporations, operating in competition with other private businesses and with the public sector.

Workers’ pension funds must not become tools for privatization, whether in Canada or around the world. At the November 2015 National Convention, CUPE delegates overwhelmingly approved a policy resolution that committed the union to opposing “the use of public pension funds for privatization.” CUPE will work to ensure that our funds are used to invest positively in the

renewal and expansion of public infrastructure in a manner that enhances and protects its public ownership and accessibility.

■ **Kevin Skerrett**



is based on the figures reported by businesses. That’s just the tip of the iceberg. You can bet that a lot more money is evading the tax collectors,” he said.

According to Deneault, the existence of tax havens leads to “tax competition” between countries, causing them to lower their own taxes on the income of wealthy people and large private corporations. This has the effect of increasing the deficit and justifying the reduction of services or the introduction of service fees.

Tax evasion has direct consequences. It leads to cuts in health care, education, child care, elder care, public infrastructure, and public transit, among others.

“Public services are cut on the pretext that there is no funding,” says Sanger. “But that’s a lie.”

“Canada is responsible for its own misfortune,” said Deneault. “Canada

knowingly signed agreements with these tax havens, allowing Canadian investors to reduce their taxes.”

The only good news is that we can collectively make the choice to reverse this trend.

■ **Pierre Ducas**

Top tax havens \$273.5 Billion



CUPE NL challenges Education Minister's 'volunteer model' for province's libraries

The president of CUPE 2329, representing the province of Newfoundland and Labrador's library workers, says suggestions from Education Minister Dale Kirby that libraries can somehow be 'given back to communities,' can only mean he expects them to be run by volunteers.

Dawn Lahey said, "Such a move would take our province back more than 30 years, to a time when we had libraries being run by 'community volunteers.'

"For the minister to suggest that libraries in schools will stay open but will not be staffed after school hours is an admission that he wants to move to a volunteer model."

Kirby has been quoted

as saying that libraries in schools will be open for students but not the public, unless the school district and the library boards can come up with a plan to keep them open for a couple of hours a few evenings a week, or when the school

is not open.

Kirby has also said they'd probably offer 'small grants' to the people from the community who'd be operating the libraries for those hours.

CUPE NL President Wayne Lucas responded: "This is the government

laying off staff in 54 locations and doing an end-run around the union by paying non-union volunteers honoraria for doing union work. This is union-busting of the worst kind, and it's directed mostly at women in rural NL.

"I would like the minister to explain to the almost 60 women in rural Newfoundland and Labrador who will be losing their jobs that he plans to replace them with volunteers. It is becoming increasingly clear that Dale Kirby and this Liberal government have no actual plan for our province's library system.

"No one has even called CUPE, or our library locals to fill us in on any of these details. Minister Kirby appears to be flying by the seat of his pants on the critically important issue of libraries in our communities."

CUPE continues to oppose the cuts across the province.

■ John McCracken



in brief

CUPE's Equality History Timeline wins award

CUPE won the Cliff Scotton Prize for its online Equality History Timeline at a ceremony in May 2016. The timeline captures more than 200 stories on CUPE's history of championing equality in our union, our workplaces and our communities.

The prize is awarded "for a narrative, video, audio or visual that reflects history, traditions, and culture of the labour movement" by the Canadian Association for Labour Media as part of its annual awards presentation.

Launched in September 2015, the Equality History Timeline features stories that cover all five CUPE equality-seeking groups: women, LGBTTI, racialized and Aboriginal members and members with disabilities. They touch on bargaining, political action, organizing, education and other areas of activism. Examples of our global solidarity work are woven throughout.

Check out the award-winning timeline at cupe.ca/equality-history

■ Wes Payne

Big change in Manitoba brings opportunity to mobilize

With the election of Manitoba's first Progressive Conservative government in nearly 20 years, the results of the April 19 election bring a new set of challenges for CUPE members in Manitoba. Under the Manitoba NDP, the relationship between labour and government was positive. However, the new government has already made overtures that ring alarm bells for members.

Premier Brian Pallister has expressed interest in privatizing child care, long-term care, and social services through Social Impact Bond schemes. At the CUPE Manitoba convention, members pledged to organize campaigns to keep these important services public, and work with the community to raise awareness of the dangers of privatization.

■ David Jacks

Sector Council Conference: Registration is open!

Registration is now open for CUPE's National Sector Council Conference, to be held October 17-20, 2016 at the Winnipeg Convention Centre.

Register online at cupe.ca/sector.

Register early and save! Get the early bird rate if you register before August 26. The deadline to register is September 16. Space is limited.

CUPE's National Sector Council helps locals share information across sectors. At this year's conference, participants will meet in sector groups, and come together in a national plenary to discuss organizing and other issues affecting our union. Your local will learn from the experience of others and share your knowledge. The conference will help CUPE to better represent our members at the bargaining table and in our communities.

We hope you'll join us and send a group from your local.

Consider sending a group with strong representation from equality-seeking groups (women, racialized and Indigenous members, persons with disabilities, and LGBTTI members) and young workers as our next generation of leaders.

OCT. 17-20 2016

NATIONAL SECTOR COUNCIL CONFERENCE

Winnipeg Convention Centre

Organizing for success

REGISTRATION OPENS JUNE 1 at cupe.ca/sector
Register early and save! Get the early bird rate if you register **before August 26.**

CUPE education workers in Ontario celebrate major legal victory

Workers have racked up another significant victory in the courts, courtesy of an effort led by 55,000 CUPE education workers in Ontario. In late April, the Ontario Superior Court issued a decision in favour of several education unions, ruling *Bill 115* unconstitutional. The court challenge was filed in 2013 after *Bill 115* stripped workers in the education sector of their rights to bargain collectively. “CUPE’s position has always been that *Bill 115* violated our basic Charter rights,” said Terri Preston, chair of the union’s education sector coordinating committee. “But we saw it as a threat to all Canadian workers, and we couldn’t let it pass unchallenged. The court agreed: this Bill was a gross overreach that trampled basic freedom-of-association rights.”

The judge ruled that *Bill 115*—the so-called “Putting Students First Act”—violated Charter rights in two ways. Essentially, the government created a situation that made true collective bargaining impossible, forcing us to bargain “in the dark” without data, and lumping our interests in with teachers, even though we could only bargain on behalf of our membership. Secondly, *Bill 115* gave the government the authority to prohibit strikes, without providing any alternative, such as binding arbitration. Gavin Leeb, one of CUPE’s lawyers on the case, said “The court ruled that in giving the government the ability to prohibit strikes, *Bill 115* violated the Charter. The Supreme Court of Canada previously found the Saskatchewan government had done the same in

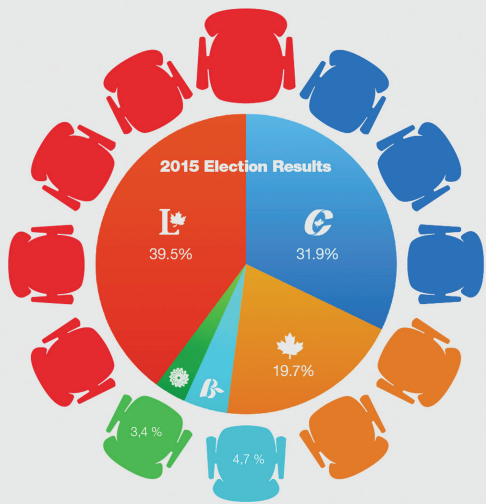
the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour case, which CUPE also supported. Together, these cases are building a body of jurisprudence in Canada that affirms workers’ Charter right to freedom of association.”

■ Andrea Addario



NDP wins Liberal support on democratic reform process

The NDP has secured a first step for a fair democratic reform process



All Canadians represented at the table.

The federal NDP secured a significant victory for Canadians on democratic reform. After the Liberal government gave themselves a majority on the committee to study future voting systems, the NDP put forward a motion to create consensus and make the committee proportionally reflective of how Canadians actually voted in 2015. In early June, the Liberal government announced it would support the NDP’s motion, removing their own majority on the committee and granting voting rights

to the Bloc Québécois and the Green Party. “This is a positive first step towards what we hope will be meaningful democratic reform for Canadians,” said NDP Critic for Democratic Reform Nathan Cullen. *“The important victory that we secured today means that all Canadians will be better heard through this process.”* “With this agreement, we are happy to have brought parties together and secured substantial concessions from

the government,” said NDP deputy critic for Democratic Reform, Alexandre Boulerice. “As a result the committee will better reflect Canadians’ votes, something that the next electoral system should also reflect.” The committee will oversee the government’s plan to table electoral reform legislation by Spring 2018. Further plans include giving each MP a mandate to hold at least one townhall in their riding and report back to the committee by October 1, 2016. The committee will also conduct comprehensive and inclusive consultations through written and online tools and report back by December 1, 2016. ■ Archana Rampure

NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER CHARLES FLEURY

Combating climate change by greening public infrastructure

In December 2015, I led the CUPE delegation to the Paris Conference on Climate Change. Together with other members of the International Trade Union Confederation, we lobbied to include the principle of a just transition in the final agreement. It is essential that workers around the world who work in industries that produce the most greenhouse gases (GHG) do not find themselves unemployed because of the necessary shift to a low-carbon economy. We won a partial victory: The Paris agreement acknowledges that an industrial transformation is underway, but it does not make just transition a binding element for the signatory countries. Because of this, Canadian unions need to keep applying pressure to the federal, provincial and municipal

governments, not only for Canada to raise its greenhouse gas reduction targets to meet the international goal of limiting warming to 1.5° C, but also to make just transition a reality. Our governments need to invest more in green public infrastructure and create decent jobs for workers affected by the fight against climate change. Training those workers to fill these green jobs will be the key to success. A successful transition requires everyone’s support. Our governments must also focus on developing renewable energy sources, such as hydro, solar and wind, and must ensure public control of the energy we use. We must not entrust the electrification of public transit to private companies that put profits first. Governments are in the best position to coordinate this massive project on behalf of citizens and the environment. CUPE members must also do their part and it starts with education. Our locals, for example, can take advantage of their general membership meetings to educate members about the real effects of climate change and the solutions that are available to us. With this information, our members will be able to convince governments and employers to take concrete steps, large and small, to win this fight for the future of our planet.

CHARLES FLEURY ONLINE twitter.com/CUPENatSec





PRIDE

in our work

CUPE.ca